



SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program

I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project



June 2015

SR 520 Wetland Mitigation at the Union Bay Natural Area

What is the UBNA project?

The Union Bay Natural Area (UBNA) is located on the north end of Lake Washington's Union Bay, west of the SR 520 floating bridge. The property is owned by the University of Washington (UW) and managed by the College of the Environment. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will construct a wetland mitigation project at this site to mitigate for adverse effects from the SR 520 West Approach Bridge North project, which is currently under construction.

The UBNA project includes:

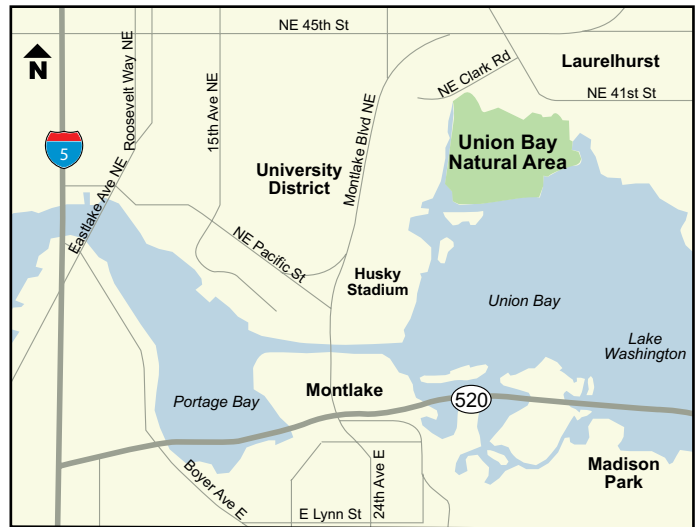
- Enhancing existing wetlands.
- Creating new wetlands.
- Removing invasive and non-native species.
- Planting native wetland species.
- Protecting wetlands by improving the areas that buffer them from adverse effects.

The mitigation supports and continues work previously begun by the UW as part of the UBNA Shoreline Management Guidelines.

Conceptual design for the UBNA mitigation site



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| Created wetlands | Wetland buffers with low growing native shrubs planted in clusters with grassy space between |
| Enhanced wetlands | Modified wetland buffer with grasses and herbaceous plants only |
| Wetland buffers | Existing shorebird habitat |
| Enhanced wetlands with native sedges and rushes with 25% shrubs in clusters | |



UBNA mitigation site vicinity map

Why are we doing wetland mitigation?

SR 520 highway construction will have some effects to wetlands. Where possible, WSDOT adjusted the highway project design to avoid or minimize effects to these resources. To comply with a variety of local, state and federal regulations, WSDOT will establish and enhance wetlands in the UBNA.

How did we select the site?

When planning transportation projects, WSDOT first seeks to avoid or minimize effects to the environment. If a project has unavoidable effects, we must mitigate for those effects. WSDOT has undertaken a comprehensive process in coordination with local, state and federal regulatory agencies, stakeholders, and tribes to identify mitigation sites for effects to wetlands associated with the I-5 to Medina project.

The UBNA site was selected by looking for mitigation opportunities that are important to Lake Washington and that would provide similar functions as those at the wetland-impacted sites. WSDOT is committed to constructing the wetland mitigation sites as documented in the Final Wetland Mitigation Report, published December 2011, which can be found on the SR 520 Program website.

How are we working with the UW?

This mitigation project is a partnership between the UW and WSDOT. WSDOT's mitigation design for the UBNA site is consistent with the UW's management guidelines for the UBNA.

The UBNA project will:

- Support the UW's implementation of their Union Bay Natural Area Shoreline Management Guidelines.
- Help WSDOT meet a portion of the wetland mitigation requirements for the SR 520 program.

WSDOT and the UW have been developing the mitigation plan for several years and will continue to coordinate through the construction, monitoring, and maintenance of the project.

What is the anticipated project timeline?

- **Spring 2015:** Design complete
- **Early 2016:** Begin construction
- **End of 2017:** Complete construction
- **Approximately 10 years following completion:** Monitoring and maintenance period to verify mitigation goals have been met



Views of Union Bay and Lake Washington can be seen from UBNA.

How do we protect shorebird habitat?

WSDOT and the UW recognize that the UBNA provides valuable shorebird habitat, particularly near Central and Shoveler's ponds. WSDOT and the UW have worked hard to identify opportunities to retain and improve shorebird habitat in the UBNA. Based on feedback provided by the birding community, significant changes to the UBNA design have been made.

Shorebird habitat protection measures that have been taken include:

- Leaving existing muddy shorelines used by shorebirds intact at Central Pond.
- Optimizing shrub planting density in areas around Central Pond to balance open habitat development and wetland buffer function.
- Planting of low-growing native shrubs in wetland areas at Central and Shoveler's ponds.
- Establishing low-growing, grass-like plants around Central and Shoveler's ponds to provide forage and cover for bird species.



UBNA's trails are enjoyed by a wide range of users.

For more information

Phone: 1-888-520-NEWS (6397)

Email: SR520Bridge@wsdot.wa.gov

SR 520 Program Website:

wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

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